



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **DHS STEPS UP INSPECTIONS AS THE WEATHER HEATS UP** *TEMPERATURES SOAR IN CLOSED VEHICLES, INCREASING RISKS TO CHILDREN*

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Child care providers across Tennessee are being put on notice—keep the children safe during the hot summer months, or face the consequences. The Tennessee Department of Human Services' child care licensing division is conducting its annual summer transportation crackdown. Hundreds of unannounced inspections and surveillances are planned this summer to ensure child care agencies follow DHS licensing rules and keep children safe as temperatures rise. Those caught breaking the rules face a range of penalties, from being put on notice, probation or even suspension of their transportation operation.

Children can suffer sunburn and dehydration after only a few moments inside a closed vehicle during hot, summer weather. Temperatures inside a closed vehicle climb quickly, rising to more than 107 degrees within minutes. Children exposed to such extreme heat can suffer heatstroke, brain damage and death. Four children died in hot child care vans in Memphis between 1997 and 2003.

"Most child care agencies we regulate are working hard to ensure their children stay safe during the hot summer months," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "Providers are trained on transportation rules every six months. Our counselors are checking in on them this summer to remind them of the detailed procedures that must be followed, correct problems they discover and, ultimately, help prevent tragedies."

The risk of severe injury and even death, however, is not limited to children transported by child-care providers. Extreme heat poses a serious danger to all children. Nationwide last year, at least 35 children died when they were left in hot cars, trucks and SUVs—one of these deaths occurred in Chattanooga. A 15-month old boy was left in his father's car in May 2007.

The Department of Human Services licenses 3,400 child care agencies across the state, and more than 700 of these offer transportation. The majority of transporting agencies are found in Memphis, with 268 providers offering the service. Knoxville has the second highest concentration, with 64 providers transporting, followed by Nashville with 60, Clarksville with 28, and Chattanooga with 25.

Last year, 80 providers were "put on notice" due to serious violations, including failure to have proper signage on the bus and keep proper maintenance records on the vehicle. Six agencies voluntarily suspended their licenses to transport due to critical violations, including failure to conduct proper walk-throughs, having exposed wires in the vehicle and failure to keep transportation logs. Keeping accurate logs helps ensure that providers know exactly where all the children are at all times and that no children are left on the van or bus.

If you witness transportation or other child-care violations, please call the Child Care Complaint Hotline at **1-800-462-8261**. This number is posted on every licensed child care vehicle.

For more information on child care licensing, visit: [http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/cc\\_main.htm](http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/cc_main.htm). If you see a child left unattended in any closed vehicle, please call your local police department for emergency assistance.

For more information on staying safe in the summer heat, visit the Tennessee Department of Health website at: [www.state.tn.us/health](http://www.state.tn.us/health).

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